

JAM Plan Facade and Lot Improvement Program (FLIP) – Lowell

I. Purpose

The Jackson/Appleton/Middlesex Urban Revitalization and Development District (JAM Plan) is a locally designated and State approved urban renewal district. The establishment of the JAM Plan by the Lowell City Council in 2000 established the need for significant public investment into the district in an effort to stimulate private interest and investment in the neighborhood. In an effort to further the implementation of the JAM Plan and improve the physical appearance of businesses and properties located in the JAM Plan area, the City of Lowell established the JAM Plan Facade and Lot Improvement Program or FLIP.

Administered through the Division of Planning and Development, FLIP provides financial incentives to businesses and commercial or mixed-use property owners who invest in their properties located within the boundaries of the city-approved JAM Plan in order to complete improvements to streetscape and building facades (including signage and lighting) and adjacent lots. FLIP is designed to:

- Stimulate private investment and improve the visual appearance of retail, commercial and mixed-use properties within the JAM Plan urban renewal district
- Improve the existing urban streetscape design and pedestrian experience of the JAM Plan's commercial corridors
- Create a more inviting and marketable center for business and economic development in the JAM Plan district

II. Program Assistance

Through FLIP, the Division of Planning and Development will provide financial assistance to private property and business owners within the designated JAM Plan district for the renovation and/or restoration of existing signage, lighting, or building facades, as well as fencing and landscaping improvements on adjacent lots in common ownership that support the commercial activities.

The program intends to reimburse qualified applicants fifty percent (50%) of eligible costs incurred up to the maximums outlined below:

- Signage Improvements:* For all signage improvements, a matching grant of up to \$2,500 is available for the design, fabrication and installation of new storefront signage, sign awnings, or sign lighting;
- Building Facade Improvements:* For all building facade improvements, a matching grant of up to \$25,000 is available for the design and construction of well-designed facade improvements for retail businesses, service establishments, commercial offices or mixed-use buildings;
- Lot Improvements:* For all vacant lot improvements located adjacent to and in common ownership or lease arrangement with a commercial or mixed-use property, a matching grant of up to \$15,000 is available for the design, installation and upgrading of fencing, lighting, and landscaping.

Up to twenty percent (20%) of the matching funds provided through FLIP can be used to cover design related expenses incurred by the hiring of a Massachusetts registered architect or landscape architect.

III. FLIP Criteria

The following criteria must be met for participation in the program.

- Applicants must be private property owners, business owners, or commercial tenants in buildings located within in the boundaries of the approved JAM Plan neighborhood, whose storefronts face onto a City of Lowell accepted public street or right-of-way;
- Tenants must obtain written approval from property owners to participate in the program;
- Property owners must be up-to-date on all municipal taxes prior to participation in the program, and must have no outstanding, uncorrected violations of building, health, or historic codes, except if they will be corrected as part of an otherwise eligible proposed project;
- All improvements are required to follow Lowell Historic Board design standards and obtain approval from the Lowell Historic Board prior to start of construction;

- E. Applicants must comply with all State and local laws and regulations pertaining to licensing, permits, building code and zoning requirements;
- F. Applicants must agree not to change or alter the improved facade(s) without prior written approval from the Division of Planning and Development for five (5) years from the date of the issuance of the funds under the FLIP;
- G. Applicants must agree, to the best of their ability, to complete all proposed improvements and request reimbursement funds within six (6) months of the approval of an application. This time frame may be extended for up to six (6) months upon written request from the applicant.

Priority will be given to the following types of projects:

- Projects that will eliminate a significant blighting influence on the JAM Plan neighborhood;
- Projects that establish a clear and attractive active ground floor retail component and design that adds to the pedestrian experience;
- Projects that include the restoration of significant historical or architectural building elements;
- Projects that currently or upon the completion of the project will include the renovation and active use of the entire property.

IV. Application Procedures

All interested applicants are encouraged to meet with Division of Planning and Development staff prior to submitting an application to FLIP to determine eligibility and funding availability.

Interested applicants should submit the following information in a completed application packet to the Urban Renewal Project Manager, City of Lowell - Division of Planning and Development, 50 Arcand Drive, JFK Civic Center, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA 01852.

A. Applicant Information, to include:

- Firm Name;
- Address(es), telephone and fax number(s);
- Structure of firm (partnership, corporation, etc);
- Size of firm;
- Years in existence;
- Names of principals in firm and primary contact(s);
- List and brief description of previously completed projects, if applicable;
- Insurance information applicable to the work to be completed (this may be provided after a project has been approved to receive FLIP funds);
- Additional information as applicable.

B. Explanation of how the applicant and proposed project complies with FLIP Criteria listed above.

C. Existing conditions/project site description, to include:

- Street address of property;
- Map or site plan of property showing the location of all lot lines, buildings, and other pertinent information as applicable;
- Description of building to be rehabilitated, including dimensions, frontage, height, depth, etc;
- Pictures of property to be rehabilitated;
- Additional information as applicable.

D. Details of proposed improvements, to include:

- Description and/or plans of work to be completed, as available;
- Description of the tasks and methods to be employed to complete work;
- Name, address, and certifications of all consultants, contractors, etc, if applicable;
- Project estimated timeline and explanation of the readiness to proceed;
- Total proposed budget to complete tasks outlined.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. A determination of application completeness and acceptance into FLIP will be provided within 21 days of receipt of an application. Applicants are encouraged to work with the Historic Board in conjunction with the FLIP application process, though an applicant is not required to begin the Historic Board process prior to applying for FLIP funds. Projects will not be reimbursed with FLIP funds until Historic Board reviews and approvals are completed.

A Committee appointed by the City Manager will review all FLIP proposals to ensure a project meets the criteria outlined above and fulfills the intent of the program. Funds will be allocated to projects on a rolling basis as available.

The City of Lowell reserves the right to reject any or all applications to the program at any time, or reject any unsolicited modifications or additions to a project once an application is submitted. The City of Lowell reserves the right to request, as necessary, additional information about the project, including financing, building details, and additional background of the applicant, consultants, contractors, etc.

V. Funding Availability

The Facade and Lot Improvement Program (FLIP) is subject to the authorization and appropriation of funds by the Lowell City Council. The Division of Planning and Development has identified \$100,000 in possible funding to start the FLIP, with additional funding being allocated to the program as available. The City of Lowell reserves the right to dissolve the program at anytime.

Contact Person:

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